



October 27, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you prepare to travel to Indonesia, Amnesty International would like to bring to your attention the human rights situation in Indonesia and urge you to press President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono for meaningful human rights improvements. Amnesty International is concerned that your decision to provide military training to the Special Forces Command (Kopassus) has sent a wrong message to the Indonesian government: that the United States is not concerned about human rights in Indonesia. We urge you to use your visit as an opportunity to negate this impression.

While in Indonesia, we strongly urge you to meet with the families of victims of state abuse, especially the families of civilians who were killed during the 1965 political turmoil and those abused by Kopassus. We also urge you to publicly state what role human rights will play in the US–Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership and emphasize that human rights will play as important a role as trade and security.

Please commend Indonesia for the leadership role it has played in creating the human rights body in ASEAN. Encourage President Yudhoyono to continue Indonesia's active role in this body and offer to assist their work.

Even though Indonesia has come a long way over the years in its respect for human rights, much more remains to be done to protect the basic rights of Indonesian citizens. We would like to highlight our human rights concerns below.

Address the Problem of Impunity

Human rights abusers go unpunished in Indonesia. One clear example is the failure of successive Indonesian governments to bring the late military dictator Suharto to trial for the roughly half-a-million to a million people who were killed in 1965. He was also never held to account for the death of around 100,000 East Timorese. This is one of the main reasons why impunity is a serious problem in Indonesia to this date.

Request:

- 1) We urge you to press President Yudhoyono to ensure that perpetrators of past human rights violations and abuses are held effectively to account.
- 2) We urge you to also press President Yudhoyono to establish a reparations program to provide reparations (including restitution compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition) to all victims of torture and other crimes under international law.

Repeal Stoning for Adultery and Caning for Homosexuality

A new Indonesian bylaw endorses stoning to death for adultery and caning of up to 100 lashes for homosexuality. This local Islamic Criminal Code was passed by the Aceh Provincial House of Representatives in September 2009.

Request: Urge the Indonesian authorities to repeal this law.

Release Political Prisoners

Indonesian authorities continue to use repressive legislation to criminalize peaceful political activities. Violations of the right to freedom of expression are particularly severe in areas where there has been a history of pro-independence movements such as Maluku and Papua.

- Former civil servant Filep Karma is serving a prison sentence of 15 years for peacefully raising the Papua flag.
- In June 2007, 22 men were arrested in Maluku province for unfurling the 'Benang Raja' flag, a symbol of South Maluku identity, after performing a traditional dance in front of President Yudhoyono. All have now been sentenced to jail terms of between seven and 20 years.

Amnesty International considers the above-mentioned men to be Prisoners of Conscience and demands their immediate and unconditional release.

Request: We urge you to demand their immediate release before you arrive in Indonesia as a mark of good will. We are confident that President Yudhoyono will take your request seriously.

Protect Human Rights Defenders

We appreciate your meeting with Human Rights Defenders at the White House and urge you to highlight the protection of human rights defenders in Indonesia. We are concerned that the Indonesian legal system is being used to intimidate human rights defenders rather than to ensure that they are able to carry out their important work.

For example, human rights defender Usman Hamid is the subject of criminal defamation proceedings due to his involvement in the campaign for justice for the late Munir Said Thalib, who was murdered by poisoning in September 2004. In addition to Mr. Hamid, at least six other human rights defenders faced criminal defamation charges in 2009 for their work: Emerson Yuntho, Illian Deta Arta Sari, Gatot, Suryani, Dadang Iskandar, and Itce Julinar.

Request:

- 1) We urge you to press President Yudhoyono to ensure that human rights defenders are not targeted through criminal defamation suits or by any other means.
- 2) We also urge you to call upon the Indonesian government to identify those at the highest level responsible for Munir's murder and publish the report of the fact-finding team.

Establish Complaint Mechanism for Police Abuse

Despite the current reform process to make the Indonesian National Police more professional and respectful of human rights, criminal suspects living in poor and marginalized communities, in particular women, repeat offenders and political activists in areas where there is a history of pro-independence movements, are disproportionately targeted for a range of human rights violations.

Request: Urge President Yudhoyono to initiate steps to set up (or review the mandate of current mechanism to ensure that there is) an independent complaints mechanism that can receive and deal with complaints from the public. The mechanism should be empowered, among other things, to submit directly its findings to the Prosecutor-General.

Allow Freedom of Religion

Blasphemy law: Several laws and regulations undermine freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Article 156(a) of Indonesian Criminal Code, enacted under a 1965 Presidential Decree, makes 'blasphemy' a crime punishable by up to 5 years of imprisonment. Amnesty International is aware of at least 13 people who are currently in prison under this law.

The Ahmadiyya community continues to face intimidation and attacks. In June 2008, a joint ministerial decree instructed the Ahmadiyya community to either declare that they are not Muslims or discontinue declaring their faith. Most recently the Minister of Religious Affairs Suryadharma Ali has threatened to disband the Ahmadiyya.

Christian groups also face restrictions on worship and evictions. In one case, at least 1,400 Christian students were evacuated from their Setia college campus in July 2008 when it was attacked by villagers allegedly linked to the Islamic Defenders Front. There have been no arrests in relation to the attack.

Request: Urge the Indonesian authorities to guarantee freedom of religion.

Repeal Discriminatory Laws against Women

A range of laws, policies and practices are discriminatory and reinforce gender stereotyping in the area of family relations and sexuality. Unmarried women and girls are denied full access to reproductive health services, while those who are married must seek their husband's consent to access some of these services. Such restrictions expose women and girls to unwanted pregnancies and other health risks, such as unsafe abortions.

Request: Urge the Indonesian authorities to repeal discriminatory laws against women to ensure they can enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights free from discrimination, coercion and the threat of criminalization.

Mr. President, Amnesty International urges you to take this opportunity to ensure that steps are taken to improve human rights in Indonesia. While in Indonesia, we strongly urge you to speak publicly and meet with human rights defenders and families of victims, especially those civilians who were killed during the 1965 political turmoil and those abused by Kopassus. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry Cox', written in a cursive style.

Larry Cox
Executive Director